



For God and Country

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March 20, 2006

Honorable Conrad Burns
United States Senate
187 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Burns:

On behalf of the 2.7 million members of The American Legion, I would like to express full support for S. 2416, The Veterans Employment and Training Act (VET) of 2006. We certainly concur with enhancing the GI Bill educational benefits by amending title 38, United States Code, to expand the scope of programs of education for which accelerated payments of educational assistance under the Montgomery GI Bill may be used.

Not every veteran is destined for college; therefore, the VET Act would make the Montgomery GI Bill more accessible for veterans with vocational aspirations other than college. The overall costs of these "short-term" vocational training and licensing programs far exceed the monthly stipend provided under the traditional "college-student-for -36- months" approach in the current Montgomery GI Bill.

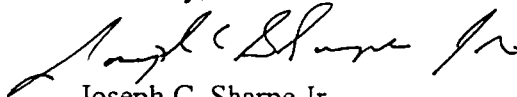
In addition, a higher percentage of today's service members are married with children when they are discharged. Meeting the financial obligations to sustain and maintain a household is paramount, and often serves as a major obstacle to their timely use of the Montgomery GI Bill. Every effort must be made to empower every veteran with options to help them make the best choice to achieve the American dream.

The current unemployment rate for veterans ages 18 to 24, at 15 percent, compared to the private sector rate at 8 percent. Increasing the educational benefit available by implementation of the VET Act through the MGIB will provide a better incentive for veterans to complete a program with immediate employment results, without the concern of going into short-term debt.

Historically, The American Legion has encouraged the development of essential benefits to help attract and retain service members into the Armed Services, as well as to assist them in making the best possible transition back to the civilian community. This historic piece of legislation, authored with the leadership of The American Legion, enabled veterans to purchase their first homes, attend college, and start private businesses.

We applaud your efforts to help provide a seamless transition into the civilian community for America's service members, and we are pleased to lend our full support to this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph C. Sharpe Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Joseph C. Sharpe Jr.
Deputy Director
National Economic Commission